(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor, sector-wise;

(c) whether FCI would be able to operate with depleted strength for more efficient performance; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (d) Food Corporation of India introduced Voluntary Retirement Scheme for its employees on 29th June, 2004, valid for three months, with a view to rationalising the manpower and reducing the establishment cost without compromising on the operational efficiency. Under the scheme 8,777 employees have taken voluntary retirement as under:

Category	No. of employees who took VRS
I	96
II	2057
III	4591
IV	2033

The operations of the FCI are being carried out smoothly within the available staff strength.

Import of raw sugar

1881. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have allowed import of raw sugar;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor in terms of domestic production and demand;

(c) the rate at which raw sugar is proposed to be imported and the sources thereof; and

(d) the steps being taken to make the country self-reliant in sugar requirement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (d) Raw sugar can be imported by sugar factories against Advance License under the existing EXIM policy as per their commercial prudence. While it is expected that availability of sugar will be sufficient to meet domestic demand in 2004-05, Government have facilitated import of raw sugar under Advance License to augment carry forward stock of sugar for the sugar year, 2005-06.

FAQ norms for paddy procurement from Orissa

1882. SHRI B.J. PANDA:
MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have relaxed the Fair Average Quality (FAQ) norms for paddy procurement by 5 per cent for the last Kharif Season;

(b) whether both the private agencies and Government are procuring the damaged paddy from the farmers of Orissa at the minimum support price fixed by the Centre; and

(c) if so, the total amount of paddy procured by Government and other agencies by the end of December, 2004 from the farmers of Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government has relaxed quality specifications for paddy procurement upto 5 per cent against the limit of 3 per cent with value cut for refractions (i) damaged, discoloured, sprouted and weevilled grains and (ii) immature, shrunken and shrivelled grains in respect of Orissa for Kharif Marketing Season 2004-05.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. Paddy is being procured as per the relaxed specification norms at the prices fixed by the Government. By the end of December, 2004, a total quantity of 7,17,413 MT of paddy has been procured by Government and other procuring agencies from the farmers of Orissa.